PLAIN

REASONS

Againſt the REPEAL of the

TEST-ACT.

Humbly offered to Publick Conſideration.

With Eaſe grown wanton, with Indulgence bold,
They ask new Favours, and forget the old;
And like their bleſt Fore-Fathers long to prove,
That Neck or nothing is the Place they love.

The Wrongheads. *A Poem.*

DUBLIN:

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REASONS

BRITISH MUSEUM

PLAIN

REASONS

AGAINST

The Repeal *of the* Teſt, *&c.*

AS the Repeal of the *Sacramental Teſt*, is now the great Subject of Diſcourſe and Debate; ſo every Man concern'd in the Iſſue of it, has a Right to declare his Sentiments, and offer them to the Publick. For my Part, I am for preſerving the Conſtitution as it is, and I think I am ſupported by many rational and weighty Conſiderations; which are to be the Subſtance of this Paper. I have read the Ar-

guments that have been publiſhed on both Sides of the Queſtion, without Prejudice or Partiality; in ſome whereof there is too much Rancour and Bitterneſs; in others a great deal of Art and Sophiſtry. I ſhall propoſe what I have to ſay, without Reflection or Subtlety, as plainly and conciſely as poſſible; in Defence of the *Teſt-Clauſe*, which, I conceive, ought *not* to be repealed, for the following Reaſons.

Firſt, Becauſe, as in every Country, there muſt be ſome particular Form of Religion eſtabliſhed; ſo it is neceſſary to the Intereſt and Safety of that Conſtitution, that every Subject ſhould give Proof of his being well-affected to it, before he be entruſted with any Office Civil or Military under the Government that gives it Protection. To deny this Aſſertion, is to affirm, that the State ought to be indifferent to all Religions, and all Perſons; which is ſuch an Abſurdity in Politicks, as no Nation has yet run into, nor, I believe, ever will.

It is well known, that in *Holland*, where *Calviniſm* reigns, the *Arminians* are excluded the Adminiſtration; and we may gueſs what the *Kirk* of *Scotland* would do, if it were in its Power; ſince it has publickly declared

declared a *Toleration* to be *eſtabliſhing Iniquity by Law*. And, therefore, the *Diſſenters*, who, from the great Share which they had in the Overthrow of the whole Conſtitution in the Reign of King *Charles* the Firſt; and from their baſe Compliances with the Court againſt the Church in the Time of King *James* the Second, lye under a ſtrong Suſpicion of wiſhing and promoting a Change of Government in Church and State, if they were favoured with an Opportunity, have no juſt Cauſe of Complaint that a Teſt is impoſed upon them, as a Security to the Publick, that they ſhall not make an ill Uſe of Power, if they obtain it.

Secondly, Becauſe the *Diſſenters*, in their Attempt towards a Repeal of the *Teſt*, ſhew, that they are not ſo much moved by a Zeal for Religion, as by Self-Intereſt and a Thirſt of Power. Their former Language was, that they only wanted a *Toleration*; this they have, and no Boby envies it to them; they are allowed to erect *Meeting-houſes*, and hold Religious Aſſemblies, and perform miniſterial Offices, when, and where they pleaſe. But they break their Faith to the Publick, and forfeit their Principle of Conſcience, by a new Demand of Profit and Dominion, which are Things purely temporal,

ral, at a Time when they are as eaſy and happy as they can deſire, next to a direct and poſitive Eſtabliſhment; which the Repeal of the *Teſt-Clauſe* would give them in part, and very probably draw the reſt after it in a ſhort time. For, Where will their Demands end? Since Paſſions and Appetites are brought into them; ſince a legal Qualification is called *Oppreſſion*, and Self-defence a *Perſecution*.

Thirdly, Becauſe no Injury is done them, nor Mark of Infamy put upon them, by the *Teſt*. No Subject has a *Right* to any Office under a Civil Government, the Equality of a State of Nature being taken away by political Conſtitutions; ſo that every Promotion to Profit or Power is a free Gift, and an Act of Favour, from the ſupreme executive Authority, which is Arbiter and Judge of private Merit and Pretenſions, and the Fountain of Honour and Reward. How, then, can a *Teſt*, which is not an Excluſion, be pronounced an Incapacity or Diſgrace, or the Impoſer of it be charged with Injuſtice? It is to no Purpoſe for the *Diſſenters* to ſay, that they are willing and able to ſerve, unleſs they can ſhew a Right to be employ'd; their Capacity for Government is not to be queſtioned; they have given Proof enough

of

of it to put us upon our Guard. And ſurely, it can be thought no Hardſhip, that the King, who is himſelf obliged to take the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper* as a *Teſt*, ſhould make thoſe his Favourites who imitate his Example; and do not condemn his Practice by obſtinate Non-Conformity.

Fourthly, Becauſe the Continuance of the *Teſt* has manifeſtly proved of great Advantage to the Nation, by bringing over, to the Eſtabliſh'd Church, a conſiderable Number, of Perſons of the beſt Fortune and Credit among the *Diſſenters*; and, doubtleſs, will daily produce more Effects of the ſame Kind; ſo that they will, in a few Years, be reduc'd to the lower Sort of People; who, without Men of Figure at their Head, will, probably, all conform by Degrees. In the *North* where they moſt abound, there are but few Eſtates now remaining in their Hands, which will be much leſſened by the next Generation, the Son being viſibly more tractable and complying than the Father; and, in ſome Inſtances, with the Father's Conſent and Approbation; and the inferior People are ſo remarkably fallen off from their Prejudices againſt the Eſtabliſh'd Way of Worſhip, that they frequently repair to the neighbouring Churches in great Numbers,

bers. Therefore the preſent Poſture of the State, is plainly calculated for producing an Unity of Religion, and, conſequently, of Heart and Mind, among the *Proteſtants* of *Ireland*; whereas an Innovation, in the manner required, would cauſe a Competition for Power, and a Claſhing of Intereſts, create a Miſunderſtanding, and increaſe Diviſion.

Fifthly, Becauſe it is no Proſtitution of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to make it a Teſt for Admiſſion into Employments, as is confidently aſſerted. It has been called a *political Engine*, and a *Tool of the State*; and to receive it with a View to Civil Offices, has been pronounced a Profanation.

But let it be conſidered, that the Legiſlature only takes hold of a religious Act, ſuppoſed to be done, of Courſe, by every Member of the eſtabliſhed Church; and makes this Proof his Communion with it, a Qualification for an Employment: He who receives it upon ſuch an Occaſion, may be as ſincere in his Intentions, and pay as great a Regard to it, as if he came to it upon an Account purely religious. If any one takes it ſolely on the Score of Intereſt, and without a juſt Veneration, the Fault is his own;

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he abuſes an innocent Ordinance, and will be anſwerable for it to the *Searcher of Hearts*. The Legiſlature is free from any Imputation on that Score; and can ſee no more Reaſon for repealing the *Sacramental Teſt*, for the irregular Conduct of ſome Perſons that take it; than for aboliſhing an Oath, which is alſo a religious Act, becauſe it is often profaned by Perjury and falſe Swearing. If the Abuſe of a Thing were a good Argument againſt the Uſe of it, there would be an End of all Injunctions for the Benefit of Society; this Way of Reaſoning goes too far, and therefore proves nothing at all.

Sixthly, Becauſe many of the *moderate Diſſenters*, declare againſt the Attempt for a Repeal, and pronounce it an Inſtance of an ambitious and reſtleſs Spirit; and did therefore, honeſtly refuſe to give any Thing towards the Contributions lately levyed in their Meeting-Houſes.

This Collection was begun, and carried on at the Inſtigation of their Teachers, whoſe Stipends are ſenſibly leſſened; and muſt, if the *Teſt* be un-repealed, ſoon become

come too little for the Support of a ſeparate and *Non-conforming* Miniſtry.

But, do they hope to alter the Conſtitution in their Favour, by the Force of Money? Or can they imagine, that they are of ſuch Importance, that the State muſt bend to maintain them in the ſame flouriſhing Condition? Eſpecially, ſince they are greatly divided among themſelves, in many Points of Diſcipline and Doctrine, as appears from their Diſputes and Pamphlets in the *North*; and from the famous Aſſembly at *Salters-Hall* in *London*; both Parties whereof, are known to have their Advocates in this Kingdom.

Seventhly, Becauſe if the Way be laid open to Employments Civil and Military, the *Diſſenters* of *North-Britain*, who cannot all be provided for in their own Country, will ſwarm over into this, fill the Poſts of the State, and the Army; and thereby not only increaſe and propagate *Non-conformity*, but likewiſe joſtle out the Natives, who are leſs active and vigilant, importunate and craving. By which Means, the younger Sons of the Nobility and Gentry, who can now be diſpoſed of tolerably well, will become

come a Burden to their Families; or be driven to the Labour and Drudgery of low Life, for their Subsistance.

Eighthly, Because it is apparent, that it has been a fixed Intention of the Legislature in *England* and *Ireland*, to continue the *Sacramental Test* upon the *Dissenters*; which, no doubt, was founded upon wise Reasons, not likely to cease. This is very evident in *England*, during the Course of five successive Reigns, from King *Charles* the IId. to King *George* the Ist. inclusive.

King *James* the IId. did, indeed, attempt the Repeal of the *Test*; but the Parliament absolutely refused him; and the Prince of *Orange* openly disapproved of his Proceedings; and what that Monarch would have done, is of no Advantage to the *Dissenters*.

After the *Revolution*, in a Conference between the two Houses, the Lord *Halifax* declared, it was the standing Purpose of the Lords to maintain the *Test*; which was accordingly confirmed by the *Act of Toleration*. It is remarkable, that the same House of Commons, which prosecuted Doctor *Sacheverel*, ordered a Proposal of one *Humphry*'s, a Dissenting Teacher, for the Repeal of the

Test

Teſt Act, to be burnt by the common Hangman: And his late Majeſty, though he annulled the Act againſt *Occaſional Conformity*, left the *Teſt* upon the old Foot.

In this Kingdom, the Oath of *Supremacy* ſerved as a *Teſt*, till it was repealed in the Reign of King *William* the IIId. and it is well known the *Diſſenters* refuſed to take it; becauſe they would not diſown the Independency of the *Kirk*: In a ſhort Interval, after that Repeal, they graſped a conſiderable Share of Power, and wormed themſelves not only into Offices; but alſo into moſt of the Boroughs and Corporations of the *North*.

In the Beginning of Queen *Anne*'s Reign, a *Teſt-Clauſe* was ſent over from *England*, tacked to a Bill againſt *Popery*; and the Parliament then ſitting, was ſo ſenſible of its National Advantage, that they rejoiced at the Opportunity given them, of repairing their own Inadvertency, and paſſed it immediately; and every Deſign ſince laid for the Abolition of it, has been diſcountenanced by a great Majority in both Houſes.

Now,

Now, to ſum up all, if it be true, as I hope I have proved, that every wiſe Government confines Offices to thoſe, who give Proof of their good Affection to its Eſtabliſhment; that the *Diſſenters* are, at preſent, as eaſy and happy as any Subjects in any Country, who are not of the eſtabliſhed Religion, and want nothing but Power; that no Injury is done to them, or Diſgrace put upon them, where they can pretend no Right, and the *Teſt* impoſed is no Excluſion; that the Continuance of the *Teſt*, has already brought over great Numbers of *Diſſenters* to the Church; and will daily bring over more; and put an End, in Time, to a Difference of Intereſt and Religion: That the *Teſt* of the Lord's Supper, is no more ſubject to Profanation, than an Oath; and the Legiſlature is not chargeable with the Abuſe of either: That the preſent Demand of a Repeal, is chiefly made by the Diſſenting Teachers, upon the Score of their own Intereſt: That the Abolition of the *Teſt*, will open a Door to Swarms of hungry *Diſſenters* from *North-Britain*, to the manifeſt Prejudice of the Natives of this Kingdom: And that it has been a fixed Principle in the Legiſlature of *England* and *Ireland*, to

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preſerve the *Teſt* as a Fence to the Conſtitution.

If theſe Things be ſo, what Reaſon can be given for an Innovation? The Attempt whereof is dangerous, and its Conſequences no Man can determine.

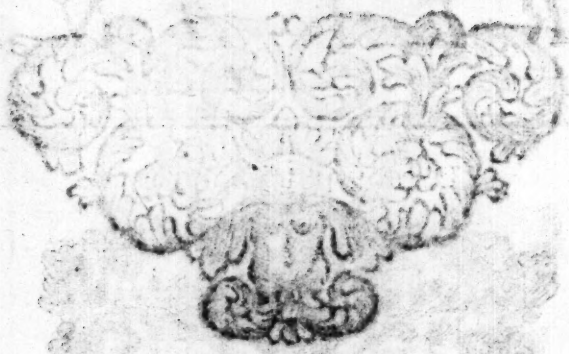
It is not uſual, in Policy, to repeal a ſtanding Ordinance, without ſome evident and great Neceſſity, which does not appear in the preſent Caſe: On the contrary, we have had many Years Experience, that the preſent Eſtabliſhment is exactly fitted to the general Good, to the Peace and Proſperity of this Kingdom, and to the Intereſt of the Proteſtant Religion.

And, doubtleſs, for this Reaſon it is, that the *Papiſts* amongſt us are ſo deſirous of the Repeal of the *Teſt-Clauſe*; they will certainly rejoice if it be effected, upon a Perſuaſion, that it will diſturb our Tranquility, and greatly turn to their Advantage.

This Fact alone, if there were no other Argument, ſhould, I think, reſtrain the *Diſſenters* from deſiring, and diſcourage the Members of the Church from promoting, a Change

Change in the Conſtitution; which can now be eaſily prevented; but perhaps, may hereafter be paſt Remedy.

FINIS.

THE CASE

OF THE REVISED